

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ACCRA
INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

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E.O. 11652: N.A.

TAGS: BDIS

SUBJECT: STATUS OF CARGO CONTAINERS AT TEMA

1. FOLLOWING COMMERCIAL CABLE ADDRESSED TO AMBASSADOR CARE OF DEPARTMENT IS REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION. "DEAR MRS. BLACK I AM COUNSEL TO SSI CONTAINER CORPORATION, A CALIFORNIA CORPORATION AND A DIVISION OF ITEL CORPORATION LISTED ON THE NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE. I AM CONTACTING YOU TO REQUEST YOUR IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION INTO A SITUATION WE ARE CURRENTLY ENCOUNTERING IN GHANA.

2. SSI CONTAINER CORPORATION IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST LESSORS OF MARINE CARGO CONTAINERS. APPROXIMATELY ONE YEAR AGO, SSI LEASED 1500 CARGO CONTAINERS TO AFRICAN CONTAINER LINE (AFCL) AS YOU MAY BE AWARE, AFCL BECAME BANKRUPT IN DEC 1975 AND THEREUPON STRANDED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD MILLIONS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF OUR CONTAINERS AS WELL AS THE CONTAINERS OF OTHER AMERICAN LEASING COMPANIES. MOST OF THESE CONTAINERS WERE INVOLVED IN MOVEMENT OF CARGO TO NIGERIA. HOWEVER, SINCE THE NIGERIAN PORT SITUATION WAS SO CONGESTED, APPROXIMATELY 800 CONTAINERS WERE OFFLOADED AT THE GHANA PORT OF TEMA WITH THE INTENTION THAT ARRANGEMENTS

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WOULD BE MADE FOR THEIR FUTURE MOVEMENT TO NIGERIA. A COM-

MITTEE COMPRISED OF THE CONTAINER LESSORS HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN NEGOTIATING WITH THE NIGERIAN PORT AUTHORITIES AND THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT TO OBTAIN THEIR ASSISTANCE IN CLEARING THE PORT AT APAPA, NIGERIA, IN AN EFFICIENT MANNER AND WITH A REASONABLE CHARGE IMPOSED UPON THE CONTAINER OWNERS WHOSE EQUIPMENT WAS STRANDED IN NIGERIA DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND THEIR CONTROL.

3. WE HAVE BEEN STRIVING TO REMOVE OUR CONTAINERS FROM GHANA IN AN ORDERLY FASHION AND PREVIOUSLY SENT TWO OF OUR EMPLOYEES TO GHANA. THERE THEY CONFERRED WITH THE PORT AUTHORITY AND WERE ADVISED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF GHANA WOULD COOPERATE WITH THE CONTAINER OWNERS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO REMOVE THE CONTAINERS FROM GHANA. WHILE OUR CONTAINERS ARE IN GHANA DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL, WE ARE CERTAINLY WILLING TO PAY A REASONABLE COST ASSOCIATED WITH REMOVING THEM FROM GHANA. IN FACT, WE HAD ALREADY AGREED ON REASONABLE HARBOR, WHARFAGE AND HANDLING CHARGES. HOWEVER, WE HAVE JUST BEEN ADVISED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF GHANA IS APPARENTLY PROPOSING TO IMPOSE A CONFISCATORY STORAGE CHARGE ON THE CONTAINERS AND PERHAPS SELL THEM TO RECOVER THE STORAGE CHARGES. SSI HAS APPROXIMATELY 260 CONTAINERS IN TEMA. THE VALUE OF EACH CONTAINER IS APPROXIMATELY US DOLLARS 1200 TO 2000 AND WE ARE ADVISED THAT THE STORAGE CHARGE IMPOSED AT PRESENT WILL BE APPROXIMATELY US DOLLARS 250 PER CONTAINER PER MONTH COMMENCING JANUARY 1976.

4. WHILE SSI IS CERTAINLY WILLING TO PAY ANY FAIR AND REASONABLE STORAGE CHARGE WE FEEL THAT IN LIGHT OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONSIDERING THAT WE FACE TRANSPORT COSTS TO EUROPE AND HEAVY REPAIR EXPENSES, BOTH OF WHICH COULD BE IN THE RANGE OF US DOLLARS 300 TO 400 PER CONTAINER, THE PROPOSED STORAGE CHARGES WILL FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES RESULT IN AN EXPROPRIATION OF OUR PROPERTY AND WE URGE YOUR IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION IN THIS MATTER.

5. WE WOULD APPRECIATE HEARING FROM YOU AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE." VERY TRULY YOURS, MARTIN D. GOODMAN, COUNSEL SSI
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CONTAINER CORPORATION, SAN FRANCISCO.

6. SUGGEST THAT YOU REPLY DIRECTLY TO SSI WITH INFO COPY TO STATE. KISSINGER

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